

EVALUATION OF NAWAAT COVERAGE OF THE POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS IN TUNISIA AFTER THE JASMINE REVOLUTION

AVALIAÇÃO DA COBERTURA NAWAAT DOS ASSASSINATOS DE POLÍTICOS NA TUNÍSIA DEPOIS DA REVOLUÇÃO JASMINE

EVALUACIÓN DE LA COBERTURA NAWAAT DE LOS ASESINATOS POLÍTICOS EN TÚNEZ DESPUÉS DE LA REVOLUCIÓN DEL JAZMÍN

*Hatem SEBEL**

Abstract: This paper adopts a systemic functional linguistics as a paradigm to analyse postings on social media. This paradigmatic relationship is based on a combination of form and meaning. It adopts a Bakhtinian dialogic view of language and discourse. His viewpoint is built on the idea that every's speaker voice is imbued with traces of previous voices and is in anticipation of other voices. This research shows how bloggers engage readers, how they negotiate and position themselves vis-à-vis the other voices. The current study adopts the Engagement framework as an analytical tool to evaluate the language used in Nawaat to cover the political assassinations in Tunisia. The current research focuses on the writer's comments, description of the political assassinations. It also focuses on the writer's comments, description and claims of external voices. Building solidarity and entente with readers who share and hold the same vision is also a matter of concern.

Keywords: Appraisal. Nawaat. Voice. Contract and expand

Resumo: Este artigo adota uma linguística sistêmico-funcional como um paradigma para analisar postagens em mídias sociais. Esta relação paradigmática baseia-se numa combinação de forma e significado. Ela adota uma visão dialógica bakhtiniana da linguagem e do discurso. Seu ponto de vista é construído sobre a idéia de que todo discurso do falante está impregnada com traços de vozes anteriores e está na expectativa de outras vozes. A pesquisa mostrará como os blogueiros envolvem os leitores, como eles negociam e se posicionam com relação às outras vozes. O presente estudo adota a estrutura de avaliação como uma ferramenta analítica para avaliar a linguagem utilizada na Nawaat para cobrir os assassinatos de políticos na Tunísia. Este trabalho utiliza uma sub-categoria de avaliação que é engagement. A presente pesquisa

* PhD researcher of Faculty of Letters Arts and Humanities Manouba. PhD researcher in discourse analysis and Contractuel assistant ; University of Tunis, Tunisia. Contact : hatemsebei_78@yahoo.fr

concentra-se em comentários do escritor, descrição dos assassinatos políticos. A pesquisa levanta os comentários, descreve as reivindicações de vozes externas. Há uma construção da solidariedade e entente com os leitores que compartilham e mantêm a mesma visão também o que é uma questão que preocupa.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação. Nawaat. Voz. Contrato e expandir

Resumen: En este artículo se adopta una lingüística sistémica funcional como un paradigma para analizar publicaciones en medios de comunicación social. Este paradigma se basa en una combinación equilibrada de forma y significado. Se necesita una visión dialógica Bakhtiniana del lenguaje y el discurso. Su punto de vista se basa en la idea de que el discurso de cada voz está impregnado con restos de voces del pasado y espera otras voces. La investigación muestra cómo los bloggers involucran a los lectores a medida que negocian y se posicionan en relación con otras voces. En este estudio se adopta el marco de evaluación como una herramienta analítica para evaluar el lenguaje utilizado en Nawaat para cubrir el asesinato político en Túnez. Este trabajo utiliza una evaluación subcategoría que es el compromiso. Esta investigación se centra en los comentarios del escritor, descripción de los asesinatos políticos. La investigación plantea los comentarios, describe los reclamos de voces externas. Hay una solidaridad construcción y entente con los lectores que compartir y mantener el mismo punto de vista también es un motivo de preocupación.

Palabras clave: Evaluación. Nawaat. Voz. Contraen y se expanden

Introduction

Before the revolution, Tunisian media was tightly controlled by the regime in the sense that print media was subdivided between state newspapers like (La Presse, Essahafa), the ruling party (Al-Uurriya, Le Renouveau) and those that were private but maintained close links with the regime through relationship, family or the de facto nepotism of the industry (Al-Chourouk, Assabeh, Le Temps, Le Quotidien, Assarih). Meanwhile few opposition press like (Tariq-el Jadid, El-Fajr and Al-Mouatinoun). The broadcast sector was dominated by two state television channels (Channel 7 and Channel 21) later name as Wataniya 1 and Wataniya 2). During the last decade two private television channels (Nessma TV and Hannibal TV) close to the ruling family emerged. Also twelve radio stations existed (EL-ISSAWI, 2012, p. 4). All private media broadcast outlets were forbidden from tackling political issues. Although the Ministry of

communication is in charge of Tunisian media, the ministry of interior was in charge of approving applications of new print media. In Contrast to such mainstream media, social media opened the space for a pluralist and diverse opinions. For many young people, the internet was seen as an alternative to resist bias and manipulation. After the revolution, journalists, activists and students thought that freedom of expression was one of the key achievements. But after the 2014 presidential election, crackdown on bloggers and activists has gradually increased. As state discourse focuses on questions of security, the rule of law and terrorism and not protecting civil liberties. Indeed, a growing enthusiasm or hysteria among politicians left (Nida Tunis and the Popular Front) or right (Nahda Party) to re-introduce the 2003 anti-terror law. Although the Constitution was seen as very progressive, many activists were harrassed under the pretext of national security and terrorism.

The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the language of social media. It draws on the work of Hunston and Thompson (2000), Swales (1990), Hyland (2005), Martin and White (2005), White (2011) and Martin (2014). Hunston and Thompson (2000) identified three main functions of language in social context: to express the writer's opinion, to construct and maintain relations between the speaker/writer and hearer/ reader, and to organize discourse as meaningful text known as metafunction (HUNSTON and THOMPSON, 2000, p. 6). This work aims at measuring the frequencies of the engagement contract and expand in *Nawaat*. To count the frequency of modals, the adjuncts, epithet, cognitive verbs and pronouns. To show how bloggers in Nawaat engage their voters, how they negotiate and position themselves vis-à-vis the other voices.

The current paper focuses on the writer's comments, description and claims of his/theirs previous policies. It also focuses on the writer's comments, description and claims of external voices. Building solidarity and entente with readers who share and hold the same vision is also a matter of concern. (WHITE, 2003, p. 263). The research raises two issues that question the research: Do authors in Nawaat use the engagement contract or expand? And how do authors in Nawaat present information, description and comments on the political assassinations? This research aims at measuring the

frequencies of the engagement contract and expand in Nawaat; To count the frequency of modals, the adjuncts, epithete, cognitive verbs and pronouns; and to show how bloggers engage their readers, how they negotiate and position themselves vis-à-vis the other voices.

This thesis consists of five major parts. The section one is an introduction to this paper. It reviews previous literature on evaluation and voice. The Second section deals with the theoretical framework. It introduces Martin and White's engagement framework (2005). The Third section presents the methodology. The section Four deals with discussion and analysis and discusses the questions of monogloss or heterogloss in Nawaat. Lastly and not the least, this work ends up with the fifth section. Voice and the interplay between the "self-representation" and the "other" representation.

Analyzing rationally, the internet played a major role in the Arab Spring and it was a subject of concern for many scholars. Honwana (2012), Farmanfarmaian (2014) and Webb (2014) studied the push factors that precipitated the Tunisian revolution and the Arab spring. Also I used an English source as the Simple Concordance Program (SCP) can not be applied to an Arabic text.

I Literature Review

The current study adopts the Appraisal framework as an analytical tool to evaluate Nawaat. Two major questions are subject of concern for Appraisal. It is concerned mainly with questions of attitude. i.e. How texts activate positive or negative views concerning participants' feelings, comments or descriptions of ideas. It is also concerned with how texts adopt a stance. Appraisal consists of three interacting domains named as 'attitude', 'engagement' and 'graduation'. This work employs a sub-category of Appraisal which is engagement. The first rationale that has driven me to adopt the Engagement framework is that evaluation is a dialogic phenomenon. The current study draws partly on Bakhtin concept of heteroglossia. The rationale behind the choice of the system is that studies of language from the Bakhtinian and dialogistic angle of meaning and structures have limited their concerns to the individual, psychological

and self- expressive function of language. However, they play down the role of social relationship to make meaning.

1.0. Voice

1.1 Voice in the Bakhtinian tradition

The present thesis deals with notion of voice which derives from the fundamental works of Bakhtin (1981, 1986) on heteroglossia.

For Bakhtin (1981), heteroglossia is the use of another's voice: "serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.324). To Bakhtin all verbal communication written or spoken is dialogic.

Bakhtin (1984) stated that all utterances/written texts are multi-voiced since the speaker borrows words marked by another voice. He stated many ways in which the speaker/writer can appropriate and transform.

Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances...Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known and somehow takes them into account...each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication (BAKHTIN, 1986, p. 91).

1.2 Voice in academic writing

During the last two decades there has been a growing interest in the evaluative and interactive features of language. The way writers/speakers transmit their personal feelings and assessments was a matter of concern for linguists. Such studies have been conducted under different names as "hedging" (HYLAND, 2005), "evaluation" (HUNSTON, 1994, 2000), "Appraisal" (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005) and "stance" (BIBER& FINEGAN, 1988, 1989). Also, Scholars in cultural studies look for texts that resist and challenge the dominant narrative.

1.3. Stance

Biber and Finegan (1989) employed the term “stance” to express personal feelings and assessments. He presented a list of twelve “stance markers”. They are defined as “the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message” (BIBER and FINEGAN, 1989, in HUNSTON and THOMPSON, 2000, p. 19). In fact, markers include lexical items selected from particular word classes. Adverbs indicating affect, certainty and doubt, adjectives indicating affect, certainty and doubt, verbs indicating affect, certainty and doubt, hedges realized through “about”, “a sort of”, “a kind of”, emphatics are used through “for sure”, “really”, “certainty”, etc., and modals indicating possibility, necessity and prediction (idem).

2. 0 Social media

Social media has broken down the state’s monopoly over the media and allowed previously marginalized groups like former political prisoners, human rights activists, youth movements like the Tunisian Communist Youth Union Youth Faction of the Labour Party, Renaissance Youth Movement, young bloggers and cyber activists to directly address the public. These groups use new media to talk about their own experiences and their vision of the future.

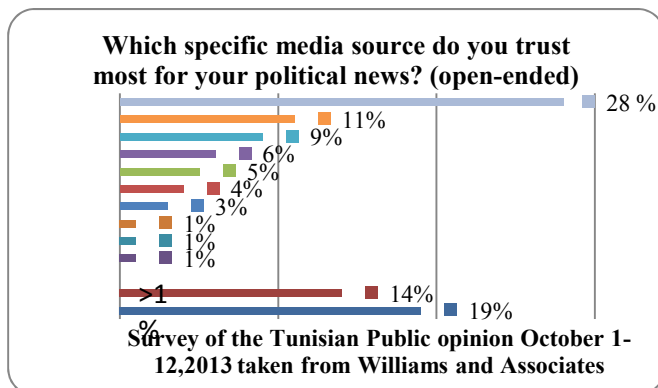
This research examines social media coverage of the political assassinations (BELAID and BRAHMI) which had taken place in 2013. To do so, this paper focuses on the writer’s presentation of the information, comments and description of the crime. It also focuses on the writer’s comments, description and claims of external voices. Building solidarity and entente with readers who share and hold the same vision is also a matter of concern.

To answer these questions, this work examines a prominent Tunisian blog, Nawaat.

2.1 Background

The increase of facebook users and bloggers and the emergence of independent electronic magazines increased people's awareness of social, political, environmental and human rights concerns in Tunisia. The number of social media users has increased since the revolution, correlating to an increasing disillusionment amongst youth with both public and private media, both of which have been described as unprofessional and biased. Lotan et al (2011) argues that social media played a major role in the 2011 revolution in Tunisia and Egypt. He states that nonprofessional journalists: 'begin to influence and co-construct the kind of news traditionally produced by mainstream broadcasters'' (LOTAN *et al.* 2011, in WEBB, 2014, p. 12). But the issue of media credibility is debatable and contingent upon various factors including legal restrictions, the influence of corrupt money, lack of professionalism and pressure from political parties. For instance, 3C Etudes conducted a survey in December 2012 in Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid, Ariana and Tunis and asked people on whether they trust media or not. About 65% of the interviewees were satisfied with media and only 31% were unsatisfied.

The graph below shows how internet has become a reliable source and people tend to trust it. According to a survey by the International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted in December 2013, 51% of the Tunisians have access to the internet and among those questioned 35% usually access it at home. Importantly, Tunisians trust the internet as a source for political news: internet is ranked as number 2 in the most trustful media source (National 1 28%, internet 11%, Nesma TV 9%, Hannibal TV 6%, Ettounisia 4%) (Survey of the Tunisian Public Opinion October 1-12 2013).



Source: The International Republican Institute (IRI), 2013, p.55.

In May 2013, the High Independent Authority was launched by the government. Although many books and articles have been written on the role of internet in the revolution, scholars did not focus on the notion of dialogism and whether social media users open up or close down the space for external voices. Bakhtin argues that all utterances exist:

“...against a backdrop of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments...pregnant with responses and objections” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p. 281).

The debate on the function of social media has continued and the issue is whether Nawaat provides a free, diverse, transparent, pluralist and nationalist alternative to the mainstream? Has social media transformed Tunisian media from a propagandist arm of the tyrannical regime into a pluralist and nationalist media? The present paper evaluates language used in Nawaat after the political assassinations.

Evaluation seems to be a key aspect of this rhetorical and ideological functionality. Evaluation may be used as an analytical tool to identify the nature of attitude, how texts present positive or negative views positioning of its audience and how texts engage dialogistically with previous writers or speakers or with potential addressee. It also helps to identify the stance employed in a particular text (WHITE, 2015, in *the International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 15).

2.2 Nawaat

Nawaat.org is an independent collective blog co-founded by Tunisians Sami Ben Gharbia and Riadh Guerfali in 2004. The goal of Nawaat's founders was to provide a public platform for Tunisian dissident voices and debates. Today Nawaat continues to provide independent coverage of Tunisian events, including human rights issues. Nawaat philosophy according to Ben Gharbia emphasizes independence from political parties and partisanship: "For digital activism in the Arab world to achieve its noble aspirations, it must remain independent and homegrown, tapping its financial, logistic and moral support [from] the grassroots level" (Ben Gharbia, in *Nawaat*). Nawaat pursued its method to present the different versions of the story and it covered the political assassinations

It opens the space for different voices to have a say and express their opinions in key questions in the domestic affair: economy, civil liberty and social policy. Nawaat.org was blocked by the government till 13 January 2011 (<http://nawaat.org/portail/>).

2.4 Challenges and Guarantees of freedom of expression

2.4.1 Challenges

Although the 2014 Tunisian Constitution guarantee freedom of opinion, thought and expression, some regulations still include violation of civil liberties like the anti-terror law, the 1975 Press Code and the the Creation of the Technical Telecommunications Agency.

2.4.2 The 1975 Press Code

According to the Penal Code, article 121 (3):

The distribution, putting up for sale, public display, possession with the intent to distribute, sell or display for propaganda purposes, of tracts...that can harm public order or good morals, is prohibited, any infraction...can bring about, in addition to immediate confiscation, a prison term of six months to five years and a fine of 120 to 1200 dinars'' (2011 Human Rights Watch)

2.4.3 The 2003 Anti-terrorism law

This law presents a vague and broad definition of “terrorism”: The draft law defines in its Article 4 a crime of “terrorism”:

as every crime, regardless of its motives, connected to an individual or collective project aiming at terrorising people and spreading fear, for the purpose of, among other things, influencing state policies and forcing it to carry out a certain act or refraining from doing it, or disturbing public order or international peace and security, or damaging public facilities and transport and infrastructure (2011 *Human Rights Watch*).

After the terrorist attacks in Bardo and Sousse, the Parliament introduced the 2015 anti-terror law which extends detention from 6 days up to 15 days for terrorism suspects. The law gives more power to the security forces broad and vague monitoring and surveillance power. Ayachi Hamami, an activist from the Tunisian League of Human Rights (LTDH):

This law gives investigators the prerogative to detain potentially innocent suspects for 15 days rather than three, without access to a lawyer,” he told me. “This goes against the basic principles of our legal system as well as international standards.” (*Foreign Policy*, August 18 2015). But later, the law has been reformed and enables the lawyers to contact and meet the suspects.

2.4.5. Article 6

Article 6 of the anti-terror law was introduced to restrict freedoms of expression and belief: Article 6 of the draft law states that “crimes of incitement to hatred, religious or ethnic fanaticism”, are treated as a crime of “terrorism” (*Amnesty International EU Office* September 30 2003).

2.4.6 Corrupt money

Media is still a venue for manipulation and has been transformed into a platform for personal and political account. For instance, we had two candidates in the 2014 Presidential Election who own private channels, *Hannibal* (Larbi Nara) and *Attounisia* (Slim Riahi). Also, *Zitouna* is biased to the Renaissance Party. *Nessma* is owned by Nabil Karoui, a leader in Nida Tounis Party (*Tunisia-live.net* February 15 2016) and therefore, the Tunisian mainstream media is becoming a central feature of political polarization between the left and the right. Also, another challenge that blocks journalists to do their job properly is the miserable working conditions of most journalists living on a temporary work.

2.4.7 The Creation of the Technical Telecommunications Agency

In 2013 the government introduced the Tunisian Technical Agency Telecommunications to combat cybercrimes (*African manager* November 21 2013). Many NGOs and civil rights activists considered the introduction of the The Creation of the Technical Telecommunications Agency as a threat to freedom of expression. When the “the Net Police Has Been Born” cyber-activist Slim Amamou posted in 2014 on Twitter “The Tunisian Prime Minister has just created the Tunisian NSA by decree.” (*Nawaat*, August 4th 2014).

2.5.0 Guarantees

The first challenge is how can we model our system on international standards and meanwhile it should take into consideration our local context. For instance in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas throughany media and regardless of frontiers” (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19*).

2.5.1 Tunisian Constitution 2014

Article 31

“Freedom of opinion, thought, expression, media and publication shall be guaranteed. These freedoms shall not be subject to prior censorship” (*Tunisian Constitution 2014*).

Article 32

The State shall guarantee the right to information and the right to access to information. The State seeks to guarantee the right to access to communication networks (*Tunisian Constitution 2014*).

2.5.2 The High Independent Authority for Audiovisuals HAICA

The High Independent Authority for Audiovisuals HAICA launched in May 2013 can play a major role in media reforms and mainly social media reforms as it has a regulatory, consultative and judicial powers including the ability to approve or reject applications for new operating licenses.

II Theoretical framework

2.0 Theoretical framework

The focus on writer-reader interaction draws on Bakhtin's dialogism. Like Bakhtin (1981, 1986), White (2000), (2003), (2005), (2008) and White (2010) state that an utterance is not only personal/monoglossic, but also involves other voices. The present dissertation derives its larger theoretical impetus from Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia or the presence of other voices in a text.

2.1 Engagement in Martin and White (2005)

Engagement is the fourth axis within the Appraisal framework. The system of engagement is related to those meanings in which the speaker/writer interact with an addressee. The writer tries to present information, description and comments of his personal ideas and tries to present information and comments to external voices. White (2003), White (2000), Martin and White's (2005) and (2010) argue that the interaction is built on the interplay of two discursive voices, monogloss and heterogloss.

2.2 Heteroglossia: dialogic contraction and expansion

White (2003) makes a distinction between the monoglossic utterance, the undialogized bare assertion and the heteroglossic or dialogistic utterance. The stance is defined as heteroglossic when the text recognizes or engages alternative voices (WHITE, 2003, p. 267). Such a meaning could be conveyed by phrases like "perhaps", "probably". However, an utterance is defined as undialogic when the information is seen as commonsensical (WHITE, 2003, p. 269).

The engagement system sets up networks of options for modelling the expansion and contraction of heteroglossic space in a text. As Martin and White (2005) articulate, the engagement network covers 'all those locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to "engage" with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context' (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005, p. 94). The Figure below shows how the engagement framework is subdivided into two major sub-categories: contract and expand. For the former, although it construes dialogic space for other voices, it is directed towards excluding external voices. Contract is classified into two formulations: Disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim is used to refer to previous utterances or some alternative points of view not to valorize them but rather to reject them and depict them as invalid (WHITE, 2011, p. 31). Disclaim consists of two sub-types: Deny and counter. White (2003) defines a case of Proclaim when the writer presents his point of view explicitly. And meanwhile he refutes a contrary position. Proclaim acts to limit the scope of dialogistic alternatives (WHITE 2003, p. 269). He

identifies three sub-types of proclamation: concur, pronounce and endorse.

For the latter, expand opens up the space for alternative voices. The proposition is shown to be “contingent” and associated with an individualized point of view. It consists of two sub-categories: entertain and attribute. For entertain, the concept is defined as the grammatical constructs employed to show that there is no unique authorial voice in an utterance or text. But rather the given information or comment should be seen as one alternative among others (WHITE, 2011, p. 30). Attribute disassociates the information from the text’s internal authorial voice. It attributes it to the external voice (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005, p. 111). Attribute includes two sub-systems: acknowledge and Distance.

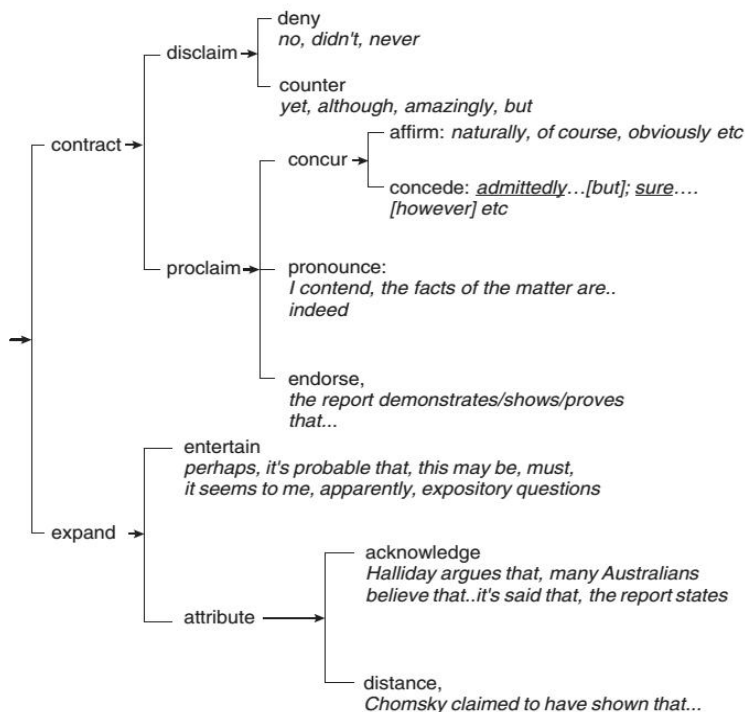


Figure 3.4 The engagement system

Source: Adopted from Martin & White (2005, p. 117)

The engagement framework seems to be an appropriate analytical tool to evaluate language in *Nawaat*. It enables us to investigate whether the authorial voice is involved or detached from the given information.

III Methodology

3.0 Methodology

The present work employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the *corpora*.

To confirm the efficiency of the use of the quantitative analysis in the political discourse, Triki and Baklouti (2002) argue that:

any linguistic unit can be divided into smaller units. A text can be divided into paragraphs, a paragraph into sentences, a sentence into clauses, a clause into phrases, a phrase into words, a word into syllables and a syllable into letters [...] or into sounds [...]. These units can be counted and any text can be translated into a set of quantitative data that can be submitted to statistical tests (TRIKI and BAKLOUTI, 2002, p. 37).

The *corpus* of the present study consists of a corpora made up of articles from Nawaat downloaded from the internet.

3.1 Procedures

The Simple Concordance Program (SCP) is used to count the frequencies of occurrences of engagement contract and expand words. According to Douglas Biber et al (1998), when we study a word, it would be fruitful to consider the different forms of the word collectively. In other words, we need to discuss and measure their frequency as a group. The term “lemma” is used to mean the base form of a word, regardless of the grammatical changes such as tense and plurality (DOUGLAS BIBER *et al.*, 1998, p. 29).

3.2 Distribution and function of modals, mental verbs and epithet

To study the distribution and function of modals, mental verbs and epithet, I analyse their usage in the Nawaat.

3.4 Framework

This work uses Martin and White's Appraisal framework. The first reason that justifies the choice of the system is my adherence to Bakhtin (1982) and Voloninov (1973) notion that all verbal communication is dialogic. In the case of academic writing, there is an evident interplay of discourses in which the author struggles to obtain and maintain room and consensus within the scientific community (HOOD and MARTIN, 2005).

The second reason refers to the highly interactive nature of blogs and their predominantly persuasive communicative goal, by which writers try to persuade readers that they not only present their information, comments, description and their point of views. But they also present external information, comments and pluralist and diverse voices.

IV Analysis and Discussion

4.0 The frequency distribution of the engagement Contract and Expand in Nawaat

The table below describes the frequency distribution of the engagement contract and expand in Nawaat. The engagement contract are the most dominant features in the sample. They are repeated 104 times. However, the engagement expand are less frequent.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the engagement expand and contract in Nawaat

Linguistic Features	Concordance Hits	Percentage
contract	104	54,7
expand	86	45,3
total	190	100

The table 2 shows the frequency distribution of the engagement contract in Nawaat. There are 104 occurrences of Disclaim. Disclaim consists of two sub-categories: deny and counter expectation. Deny/Negations are realized through expressions such as “not”, “fail”, “failure”, “no”, “did not succeed”. Counter are issued by expressions like “but”, “even”, “only”, “still”, “unfortunately” and “just”.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the engagement contract in Nawaat

Linguistic Features	Examples	Concordance Hits	Percentage (%)
Negation	Not, no, fail	56	53,85
Counter	But, yet, even, nly, just	41	39,42
Proclaim:Pronouncement And endorse	Of course, obviously	7	6,73
total	-	104	100

In the example below, the writer presents “the extremists” as responsible for the assassination of the leftist leader Chockri Belaid:

These extremists are the most likely culprits in the murder of this free Muslim citizen whose two young daughters were orphaned

mercilessly. It is not farfetched to argue that whoever committed the murder most likely than not went away hoping the horrendous crime will be counted in his list of good deeds on the side of God” (*Nawaat* 11 February 2013).

The writer presents the reader as a venerable creature who would be easily influenced by the the government “false” vision. The writer is displayed as having a great expertise and he is able to clarify the misunderstanding. Denials play a corrective role rather than confrontational role. In this case, Denials build relationship of solidarity as long as the reader does not resist the proposition (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005, p. 120).

The writer employs the engagement contract via pronouncement formulations. The underlined words are adjuncts “ultimately”, epithet “crucial” and nouns “perpetrators”. They are used against an assumed counter position: “So far there is no progress in the murder investigation. Crucial to embarking on democratic transition and national reconciliation is holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes and ultimately, making justice prevail”. (*Nawaat*, July 31 2013).

These formulations involve authorial emphasis or explicit authorial intervention (Martin and White, 2005, p.127). Pronouncement is dialogic in the sense that the writer acknowledges the presence of the counter position. The accumulation of epithet and adjuncts show that the blogger is aware of the resistance of another third party that may challenge the relationship between the writer and the reader. In contrast, the government states that there is a real progress in the murder investigation. Although the author acknowledges this alternative position, the above mentioned formulations are used to defeat and confront the official statement. The purpose here is to reduce the dialogic space (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005, p. 127).

4.1 Frequency of the engagement expand in Nawaat

The concept entertain is defined as the grammatical constructs employed to show that there is no unique authorial voice in an

utterance or text. A given information is “one of a number of possible alternative position” (WHITE, 2011, p. 30). Entertain is realized through mental processes like “we believe”, “I know” and the use of ‘deontic’ modality. The example below shows the frequency distribution of the engagement expand in Nawaat. There are 72 occurrences of entertain. The projection of the external voice/Attribution is less frequent in the corpus. Only 14 occurrences of attribute.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of the engagement expand in Nawaat

Linguistic features	Examples	Concordance Hits	Percentage
Entertain	Will, would, must,may, might, can, probably, perhaps	72	83,72
Attribute	argue, iew, said	14	16,28
Total	—	86	100

Formulations of entertain are realized through mental verbs like ‘he knows’ and the conjunction “or”:

Since then, I have constantly asked myself: What did he want to tell me? Was it to warn me that he knew something was going to happen or was it just to talk to me?” Zouheir El Hamdi’s eyes were foggy with tears. He was one of Mohamed Brahmi’s best friends” (*Nawaat*, July-31, 2013).

The writer presents the proposition as one possibility among others. ‘or’ conveys a message of uncertainty on the part of the writer. Table 3 shows the occurrences of attribute realized via the verb “heard” and the reporting verb “told”:

“The moment we heard the gunshots, I left the house and saw my husband in a pool of blood. There was one person on a motorcycle. Another, on foot, got on behind him. They took flight while I was

trying to tend to my husband.” The body of Mohamed Brahmi was riddled with bullets” (*Nawaat* July 31 2013).

There are two sub-categories within attribution: acknowledge and distance. They are realized through the reporting verbs: announce, say, report, believe and think. In the example below, the writer dissociates the proposition from the internal authorial voice (Martin and White, 2005, 112). The writer quoted Belaid’s wife to recount what had happened during the day of the assassination: “I am not ready to attend the circus today,” he told his wife. She recounts as she lifted herself. These were the hard, but typical, words of a deputy who was not afraid to speak his mind” (*Nawaat* July 31 2013).

Acknowledgements are dialogic since the writer associates the information presented with voices which are external to the text and present the individual voice as engaging interactively with other voices (MARTIN and WHITE, 2005, p. 112).

V Voices in Nawaat

5.1 Self-representation VS external representation

Bakhtin 1986 defines self-representation and external representation as:

Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with other words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of “our-own-ness”, varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework and re-accentuate (BAKHTIN, 1986, 89 in SHAW, 2010, p. 4).

Within the engagement framework, White (2002) two major categories of resources: ‘intra-vocalisation’ and ‘extra-vocalisation’. For the former, they are realized through resources of “modality, proclaims and disclaims”. For the latter, it consists of resources in the text that include external resources.

For Vygotsky (1986), inner speech could be defined on an elementary level as “speech for oneself” while “external speech is speech for others” (VYGOTSKY, 1986, p. 225).

This section studies voice in *Nawaat*. It investigates the interplay of the “self” and “otherness” in the coverage of the political assassinations in 2013. During the rule of the Troika: a coalition between an Islamist party and two secular parties, two assassinations occurred. The question is to unveil signs of involvement and engagement or detachment in *Nawaat*.

5.1.2 The “Self” as a commentator

The writer uses the engagement contract, realized through Disclaim to convey a negative emotion on the part of the authorial voice. He displays a high degree of commitment to unveil the puzzle of the assassination of Belaid:

For “*awaiting a conclusive investigation into the murder*” does not mean the cancellation of an obvious truth. The murder of Leftist activist Chokri Belaid cannot come from the opposition parties to the current rulers, or opponents of the ideology called ‘Political Islam’, or even enemies of the dogma of puritan ignorant Kharajites (*Nawaat* 11, February 2013).

The writer presents his argument as unproblematic and could be treated as “taken-for-granted” information realized through the monoglossia of ‘epithet “obvious”’. The use of formulation of concur which openly announces the addresser is agreeing with a projected partner (Martin and White 2005, p.122). The addresser and the addressee are presented in a completely alignment. Thus such agreement should be considered as taken for granted. Such formulations “obvious” and of course” are also considered as dialogic in the sense they present the writer in ‘dialogue’ with the reader in general.

The reader is invited to take a negative view of “the political Islam”, although he uses distance formulation “called”. Writer and

reader are construed as standing together against what he called “the political Islam”

5.1.3 The “self” as a reporter

The writer employs the engagement expand via attribute formulations to present external voices: ‘Aguilli’ and “Ali Laarayedh”: Taieb Aguilli, the president of the ‘Search for Truth on Assassination of Chokri Belaid Initiative,’ said on radio that Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh blatantly ignored the threat and destroyed the document following the assassination. (*Nawaat* 20 September 2013)

The writer promotes a heteroglossic perspective by introducing different voices. Aguilli accuses the Prime Minister of being complicit in the assassination of Brahmi. The use of acknowledgements allow the writer to remain “aloof” from any relationship of alignment or disalignment. But Later, the writer shows overtly his alignment with Aguilli and disalignment with the Prime Minister via the use of monoglossic word “blatantly”.

Conclusion

The Engagement framework, a sub-category of the Appraisal framework, enables us to unveil the linguistic choices used by writers in *Nawaat* to construe the “dialogic environment”. One of the key findings is that the engagement contract are the dominant features in its coverage of the political assassinations. Although writers present other external voices, they display their information and description as ‘unproblematic’. Writers tend to align with the putative reader to reveal the puzzle of the political assassinations. Writers attempt to bring readers into discourse to engage them and anticipate possible resistance.

This analysis displays a high frequency of Disclaim which consists of two sub-categories: deny and counter expectation. Occurrences of proclaim (endorsement, pronouncement and concur) in the corpora are less frequent. These formulations involve authorial emphasis or explicit authorial intervention. Although the author acknowledges this alternative position, such formulations are used to

defeat and confront the official statement. The purpose here is to reduce the dialogic space. For the engagement expand, the sub-category entertain is the most dominant feature. Only few occurrences of attribute in the corpus.

Voice is also a question of concern in this paper. It investigates the interplay of the “self” and “otherness” in the coverage of the political assassinations. We have many formulations of entertain, proclaims and disclaims that show the writer inner voice is referred to explicitly. But few occurrences of attribute that show the writers disassociate themselves from the inner voice and stand ‘neutral’. The use of acknowledgements allow the writer to remain “aloof” from any relationship of alignment or disalignment.

Bakhtin’s ideas have been adopted not just to the literary studies, but also in philosophy, in cultural studies and media studies. Engagement is concerned with writer/reader positioning in terms of the interrelated notions of heteroglossia. the heterogloss-monogloss distinction attends to whether the proposition is represented as indialogised, or whether it asserts a proposition as ‘fact’ and undialogised.

Young bloggers who see themselves as disregarded and under-represented in the mainstream media, regard social media as a space to present their own ideas, information and description of the political assassinations. *Nawaat* seems to be a space for young activists to address questions of civil liberty, corruption and regional inequality and resist the anti-terrorism law.

The challenge is how writers in *Nawaat* could write in an impartial style that at once preserve their individuality and at the same time identifies them as members of the academic community (journalism). But, these young writers still need training and financial assistance. The government should give more power to the National Union of Tunisian Journalists and the High Independent Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HAICA), to protect Tunisian journalists and bring to justice those who violate their rights.

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